

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 EB-07 /080 W
-----041030Z 070919 /12

R 031725Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3823
INFO AMEMBASSY ACCRA
AMEMBASSY BAMAKO
AMEMBASSY CONAKRY
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
AMEMBASSY LOME
AMEMBASSY MONROVIA
AMEMBASSY NIAMEY
AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU
AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ABIDJAN 5647

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, ECON, EIND, IV
SUBJECT: CAMPAIGN AGAINST CORRUPTION: POSSIBLE SHAKE-UP IN OFFING

BEGIN SUMMARY: SOME WEEKS AGO THE GOVERNMENT OF IVORY
COAST (GOIC) BEGAN A SUSTAINED CAMPAIGN AGAINST CORRUPTION.
THE POLITICAL BUREAU OF THE PARTY CONDEMNED IT, THE
PRESIDENT ISSUED A DECREE REQUIRING "NO-KICKBACK" AFFIDAVITS
TO BE EXECUTED IN CONNECTION WITH OFFICIAL FINANCIAL TRANS-
ACTIONS, AND THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IS PRESENTLY CONSIDERING
A LAW PROVIDING STIFF PRISON SENTENCES FOR PERSONS CONVICTED
OF CORRUPTION. ON HIS RETURN FROM AN OFFICIAL VISIT TO
IRAN JUNE 2 HOUPHOUET AGAIN WARNED THAT FIRM ACTION WILL
BE TAKEN AGAINST OFFENDERS. MEANWHILE THE CAPITAL IS
BUZZING WITH RUMORS OF AN IMPENDING GOVERNMENT SHAKE-UP
AND WHERE THE AXE MIGHT FALL. END SUMMARY.
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1. ALTHOUGH THERE HAVE BEEN PERIODIC CAMPAIGNS AGAINST
CORRUPTION IN IVORY COAST OVER THE YEARS, THE PRESENT ONE
BEGAN IN EARNEST IN MARCH WITH A POLITICAL BUREAU MEETING
CONDEMNING THE EVIL AND DECIDING TO INITIATE STRONGER
LEGISLATION AIMED AT HIGHER-LEVEL OFFENDERS NOT READILY
COVERED UNDER THE TERMS OF THE PRESENT PENAL CODE. AN

EDITORIAL IN THE PARTY-CONTROLLED WEEKLY NEWSPAPER A FEW DAYS LATER NOTED THE MANIFOLD FORMS WHICH CORRUPTION MIGHT TAKE SUCH AS BRIBES, KICKBACKS, CUSTOMS MANIPULATION OR AWARING OF GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS. THE PAPER REFERRED TO THE "FAMOUS LOCKHEED AFFAIR" AS AN EXAMPLE WHERE EVEN MINISTERS AND HIGH OFFICIALS HAD BEEN IMPLICATED AND LOST THEIR JOBS.

2. ON APRIL 5 AT A COUNCIL O MINISTERS MEETING HOUPHOUET ISSUED A PRESIDENTIAL DECREE REQUIRING THAT ANY PAYMENT FROM OFFICIAL FUNDS PURSUANT TO A GOVERNMENT CONTRACT MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY A SWORN AFFIDAVIT THAT NO COMPENSATION OF ANY SORT HAD BEEN MADE IN OBTAINING THE CONTRACT.

3. AT ITS MAY 14TH MEETING HE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS REVIEWED THE PROPOSED LEGISLATION WHICH WAS THEN SENT TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WHERE IT IS NOW IN THE FINAL STAGES OF CONSIDERATION BEFORE PASSAGE. THE LAW, THE TEXT OF WHICH HAS NOT YET BEEN PUBLICLY RELEASED, PROVIDES FOR 5-10 YEARS IMPRISONMENT FOR CORRUPTION WHERE THE VALUE CONCERNED IS LESS THAN 10 MILLION CFA (\$40,000), WITH HIGHER PENALTIES RISING TO 20 YEARS FOR CORRUPTION INVOLVING MORE THAN 25 MILLION CFA (\$100,000). THE LAW DEFINES VARIOUS FORMS OF CORRUPTION, DISTINGUISHES BETWEEN "ACTIVE" AND "PASSIVE" CORRUPTION, AND ALSO COVERS PARA-STATAL ORGANIZATIONS AS WELL AS PRIVATE ENTERPRISES.

4. IN THE COMMUNIQUE FOLLOWING THE MAY 14 MEETING, WHICH
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WAS CHAIRED BY HOUPHOUET, IT WAS SPECIFICALLY NOTED THAT NO ONE WILL BE EXEMPT FROM THE NEW MEASURES, INCLUDING THE PRESIDENT, MINISTERS, MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT, AMBASSADORS, AND DIRECTORS OF GOVERNMENT SOCIETIES DOWN TO THE MIDDLE AND LOWEST LEVELS.

5. ON RETURN FROM HIS OFFICIAL VISIT TO IRAN JUNE 2 HOUPHOUET AGAIN RETURNED TO THE THEME OF CORRUPTION AT HIS AIRPORT NEWS CONFERENCE EMPHASIZING THE NEED FOR HONESTY IN ADMINISTRATION. HE CRITICIZED THE TENDENCY OF IVORIANS TO LIVE BEYOND THEIR MEANS AND CALLED FOR GREATER AUSTERITY. ECHOING THE THEME OF THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE WHO SAID RECENTLY THAT CORRUPTION WEAKENS THE NATION'S DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS NOT JUST BY DIVERTING FUNDS BUT ALSO BY GIVING THE COUNTRY A BAD REPUTATION INTERNATIONALLY, HOUPHOUET WARNED THE NATION COULD NO LONGER TOLERATE DISHONESTY, EVEN AMONG THOSE OTHERWISE NOTED FOR COMPETENCE.

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SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 EB-07 /080 W
-----041029Z 071020 /12

R 031725Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3824
INFO AMEMBASSY ACCRA
AMEMBASSY BAMAKO
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ABIDJAN 5647

5. COMMENT: ABIDJAN IS RIFE WITH SPECULATION ABOUT WHAT PROMPTED THE LATEST CORRUPTION CAMPAIGN AND ON WHOM THE AXE MIGHT FALL. ONE CASE OF WHICH THE EMBASSY IS AWARE IS THE STLL-UNPUBLICIZED DISMISSAL SEVERAL WEEKS AGO OF THE DIRECTOR OF FOREIGN TRADE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE WHO WAS CAUGHT ACCEPTING REMUNERATION, REPORTEDLY FROM LEBANESE TRADERS, IN RETURN FOR IMPORT PERMITS. THE CANCELLED CHECKS IN EVIDENCE ARE SAID TO HAVE WOUND UP ON HOUPHOUET'S DESK. RUMORS ALSO ABOUND OF HIGH-LEVEL PROFITEERING FROM THE CURRENT RICE SHORTAGE IN IVORY COAST. THIS, COUPLED WITH THE MINISTERIAL RESHUFFLE THAT HAS BEEN EXPECTED IN THE COUNTRY SINCE LAST DECEMBER, HAS LED TO SPECUALATION THAT A SUBSTANTIAL SHAKE-UP MAY BE IN THE OFFING WITH SEVERAL MINISTERS SUCH AS SERI GNOLEBA OF COMMERCE AND SAWADOGO OF AGRICULTURE PRIME CANDIDATES TO LOSE THEIR JOBS. ALSO POSSIBLY
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VULNERABLE IS MINISTER OF FINANCE HENRI KONAN BEDIE WHO HAS LONG HAD A REPUTATION FOR ALLEGED CORRUPTION (HE IS POPULARLY NICKNAMED "TEN PERCENT HENRY"), ALTHOUGH IN THE PAST HE HAS PRVED IMMUNE BECAUSE OF CLSOE PERSONAL TIES TO HOUPHOUET AND HIS OWN INTERNATIONAL STATURE. IN THE END, THE EMBASSY WOULD GUESS THE EVENTUAL SHAK-UP MAY BE OF MORE MODEST PROPORTIONS THAN MANY NOW EXPECT, WITH HOUPHOUET USING A FEW EXAMPLES AS OBJECT LESSONS TO OTHERS. IVORY COAST DOES NOT LIKE RADICAL CHANGES AND HOUPHOUET MAY WELL DECIDE AGAINST A MASSIVE SHAKE-UP AS DESTABLIZING TO THE GENERALLY GOOD INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC REPUTATION WHICH IVORY COAST ENJYS. CORRUPTION IS A PROBLEM, AND EVIDENTLY A GROWING ONE, BUT IT REMAINS OF LESS SERIOUS PROPORTIONS HERE THAN IN A NUMBER OF NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES, AND HAS NOT SIGNIFICANTLY HINDERED INVESTMENT AND DEVELOPMENT. IN ANY EVENT, AS A FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL RECENTLY COMMENTED, "THE OLD MAN" IS CLEARLY HOPPING MAD AT SOMETHING AND THE COUNTRY IS WAITING TO FIND OUT EXACTLY WHAT. END COMMENT. STEARNS

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Message Attributes

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TAGS: PINT, PGOV, ECON, EIND, IV
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